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**Summer Research and Professional Development Grant**  
*Azymes, Beards, and Purgatory: The Other Issues that Divided Christendom*

**Introduction**

I am requesting a summer stipend to continue writing *Azymes, Beards, and Purgatory: The Other Issues that Divided Christendom* for Oxford University Press. Having already written *The Filioque: History of a Doctrinal Controversy* and *The Papacy and the Orthodox: Sources and History of a Debate*, this third book will effectively complete a trilogy, and detail all the reasons why the Eastern (i.e., Orthodox) and Western (i.e., Catholic) Christians have remained divided for almost a millennium. I have every reason to believe that I can complete a rough draft of (at least) two more chapters by the end of the summer.

**I. Statement of the Aims and Objectives of the Project**

Since the 2010 publication of my book on the *filioque* (concerning a doctrine about the Trinity that has divided Eastern and Western Christians for centuries), it had always been my intention to write a follow-up work on the other issues that had brought about the schism between Christianity's two largest denominations — Roman Catholicism (1.2 billion adherents) and Orthodoxy (300 million). When I realized that the papacy (i.e., the role played by the pope in the Church) would require its own book, I temporarily set aside the three other issues that have been cited as reasons for the schism — the West's use of unleavened bread for the Eucharist (as opposed to the Eastern use of leavened bread), the Catholic doctrine of purgatory, and the question of whether or not priests should be bearded. Last year I began writing that book with the help of a R&PD grant, completing the introduction and first two chapters. I submitted those materials with a proposal to Oxford University Press, who, after receiving some laudatory input from reviewers (*see attached*), offered me a contract (*see attached*). They believe, as I do, that a book on these "other issues," alongside the two already published, will provide a full account of all the major stumbling blocks for Catholic-Orthodox unity, providing scholars, Church authorities, and interested readers with a trilogy of books that can then be used as *the* authoritative source for understanding the historical/theological debates separating Eastern and Western Christendom.

My goal for the summer is to complete (at least) two more chapters of the manuscript, with subsequent chapters to be written over the next 1 ½ years. This should allow me to finish the project by the contracted date, which is December 2021.

## **II. Background on Work Already Accomplished**

Over the last decade, in researching my books on the *filioque* and the papacy, I have collected many primary and secondary sources dealing with the issues to be covered in this latest work (unleavened vs. leavened bread, purgatory, clerical beards). While obtaining some further books and articles will be necessary, most of the material needed to begin work is already in hand. This summer's work will focus on the issue of unleavened bread, an area where I have already done much research and given several papers (e.g., "The Last Supper as Passover Meal: The Patristic View" at the International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford UK and "Leavened and Unleavened: Did the Church Fathers Attach Any Theological Significance to the Type of Bread Used in the Eucharist" North American Patristics Society, Chicago, IL). The work done for these papers and the materials gathered for them will provide the basis for much of what is to be accomplished this summer.

## **III. Statement of the Procedures/Methodology**

I am budgeting approximately 4 weeks for each of the two chapters planned, each chapter containing approximately 20,000 words (or 40 double-spaced pages). This puts my weekly output for the two-month period at about 10 pages a week, which (in my experience) is well within expectations. This 8-week period dedicated to drafting the two chapters will be in lieu of summer teaching.

## **IV. Importance or Value**

Today the world's 1.2 billion Catholics and 300 Orthodox Christians remain divided by theological differences that first manifested themselves over a millennium ago. In my previous works I have already addressed two of these issues, the *filioque* and the papacy, and yet examining the literature from the 9th century onwards one finds that these were not always thought to be the chief causes of the division. More often than not Catholic and Orthodox writers of the period ascribed the schism to the West's use of unleavened bread in the Eucharist, or to the fact that Latin priests shaved while Orthodox clergy had beards. Today many might be tempted to hold that these are minor issues, no longer of critical importance. However, if one is to achieve reunion between the churches one must first understand how the separation occurred in the first place. Today

the role of the pope may be the chief cause of the division, but it only became such after the so-called “other issues” had led both parties to view the other with suspicion and distrust.

The goal is that this volume would, like its predecessors, also serve the cause of Christian unity, allowing theologians and hierarchs on both sides to have access to an unbiased account of their common history. I am pleased to say that my work thus far has been recognized by both theologians and Church authorities as pivotal for moving the two sides closer together. Reviews in academic journals by both Catholic and Orthodox scholars have praised the objectivity and irenicism of my writing, recommending it to all those interested in the field of Christian unity. In fact, this summer (June 2019) a conference will be held in Greece (“Mapping the Una Sancta: on Orthodox-Catholic Ecclesiology Today”) that will use my previous books as a “roadmap” for working toward Roman Catholic-Orthodox unity.

As one reviewer wrote, works like these “are indispensable for academics, interested laypersons and, perhaps most importantly, the actual participants in the dialogue between the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox churches.” Another reviewer posited that while East-West unity may not come in the immediate future, “if it does happen, [Siecinski’s] contribution to it as a scholar will have been significant.”

## **V. Further Research or Study**

A project like this will occupy the next few years of my life, so between researching and writing this volume I expect to be kept busy until at least 2021. For the immediate future I will move, chapter by chapter, through the rest of the book, hopefully completing a first draft at some point in 2020. Once editing is completed and the book submitted, I will continue my work in the field of early Christian/Byzantine studies with a focus on the relevance of these subjects for modern-day Christians.

## **VI. Outcome**

As my CV bears out, I have a solid track record in publication, having published three books, one edited volume, and several chapters/articles. All my previous summer research projects have resulted in the publication of either books, articles in peer-reviewed journals, or chapters in books. This makes me confident that given the time and funding necessary, this project can be brought to a successful conclusion in the time allotted. The fact that the book already has a contract with Oxford University Press (*see attached*) makes it eventual publication certain.